Gay-rights lobby stakes hopes on House gambit

A bill ostensibly aimed at banning employment bias against homosexuals, introduced by Massachusetts Reps. Barney Frank and Gerry Studds last week, is about legitimization, not discrimination.

The legislation is a scaled-down version of a gay civil-rights law homosexual activists have been pushing for years. At this point, even they concede it's a lost cause and are willing to settle for an extra large loafer in the door.

DON FEDER

The gay movement sees its window of opportunity slamming shut. Its first friend in the Oval Office is on life support. Anti-gay rights initiatives (like those that passed in Colorado in '92 and Cincinnati and Tampa in '93) are gaining at the state and municipal levels. Thanks to Clinton's popularity, the next Congress will be considerably more conservative than the present.

Homosexuals need a victory now, something to deflect populist initiatives. With an unerring PR instinct, they are focusing on the one issue where a majority agrees with them.

A recent poll conducted by the homosexual Human Rights Campaign Fund showed 48 percent thinks civil rights laws for gays are an attempt to secure "special rights"; only 35 percent believes they concern "equal rights." Anti-gay rights ballot measures are solidly favored by 31 percent, with only 20 percent firmly opposed.

However, on the issue of job protection, the public is quite sympathetic, with 77 percent saying gays should not be discriminated against in employment.

As Peter LaBarbera points out in his Lambda Report (which surveys the gay scene from a pro-family perspective), the movement is counting on its congressional partisans to hold showcase hearings where "victims" of job discrimination will be paraded forth to groan about their oppression.

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If homosexuals are a victimized minority, they are unlike any other in the course of human history. Residents of a velvet ghetto, 55 percent have household incomes in excess of $50,000, almost twice the national average.

They are three times as likely to have college degrees and occupy professional or managerial positions as other Americans. Gay PACs are in the top 1 percent of campaign contributors.

When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted, evidence of decades of injustice was ubiquitous. As a group, homosexuals have never been subjected to official segregation, prevented from voting or denied access to public accommodations. Nor is there a shred of evidence of economic deprivation to support discrimination claims.

In a nation as large and whiny as ours, it's always easy to find alleged victims who can be trotted out at congressional hearings. But the reality of the situation is found in an article in the homosexual publication The Advocate.

Writing in the March 22, 1994, issue, business columnist Ed Mickens admits: "Today, it's rare that anyone gets fired just for being gay."

Mickens should know. He's the author of "The 100 Best Companies For Gay Men And Lesbians," wherein are listed corporate giants with "gay-friendly policies," including training programs that teach "sensitivity" on homosexual issues — How to Overcome the Judeo-Christian Ethic in Five Easy Sessions.

Among the avid indoctrinators are AT&T, Bank of America, Colgate-Palmolive, Walt Disney, Digital Equipment, Dow Chemical and Eastman Kodak. A conscientious Christian or Jew is far more likely to feel uncomfortable in the politically correct workplace of the '90s than the average homosexual.

To forestall opposition, the Frank-Studds measure has an exemption for religious organizations — a truly meaningless gesture. Once the federal government extends civil rights protection to a group, discrimination of any sort becomes untenable in the long run. If Congress itself doesn't nullify the exemption at a later date, the federal judiciary will.

Gays want desperately to establish themselves as a "protected class" at the federal level. Once they do, their allies on the bench will have a rationale for striking down all sorts of discrimination — limiting marriage to heterosexuals, the Boy Scouts' refusal to allow openly homosexual scoutmasters, the military's don't-ask/don't-tell policy, age of consent laws and adoption regulations that exclude gays.

A 1987 article in the homosexual magazine The Guide urges: "In any campaign to win over the public, gays must be cast as victims in need of protection so that straights will be inclined by reflex to assume the role of protector."

Given the innate compassion of the American people, it's a shrewd maneuver. Since in politics what you see is rarely what you get, the public should view the Frank-Studds bill with extreme skepticism.

Feder is a columnist for the Boston Herald.

STATE

Littleton back-to-basics board off to a slow start

Associated Press

LITTLETON — When three back-to-basics candidates won a majority on the Littleton board of education last November, the parents who elected them were hoping for a quick change in teaching methods.

Some of those parents are complaining that little has changed since then and that at least one of the three board members has sold out to the teachers union.

"I was hoping the whole mentality of the district would change to a more academic nature," Jan Fiske, the parent of two children at Sandburg Elementary School, told the Rocky Mountain News.

Fiske said her son, who is in the fifth grade, came home in January with a note explaining that children were pairing up to discuss feelings and her daughter, who is in the third grade, came home with a two-page survey asking students how they feel about math.

She said those were the type of activities the new board members were expected to eliminate.

A curriculum committee will report to the school board in December.

Some critics accuse school board chairman Bill Cisney of selling out to the teachers' union, which bitterly opposed the back-to-basics movement, and cite his vote to increase the ratio of teachers to parents on the panel studying curriculum.

Cisney, however, said his critics are not realistic in believing the board can implement change without building alliances with teachers.

Cisney, Carol Brzeczek and John Fanchi ran as a slate after the previous school board majority repeatedly rebuffed parents who said the schools are soft on academics. Their strong showing at the polls sent shock waves through educators, many of whom had been ignoring similar appeals from parents.

The Littleton parents were critical of programs that emphasized self-esteem or asked students to explore their feelings.

Cisney notes that the back-to-basics group put an immediate halt to graduation requirements at Littleton High School that emphasized human relations and personal growth.

He said he questions some of the programs Fiske objected to, but that he is not going to run over opponents the way the previous board did.

"It is not my desire now to turn the tables and impose my views on people who disagree with me," he said. "Just the opposite. I would like people in the community to feel I listen to people who oppose me and that I take their views into account."

Seven wildfires rage on in dry western Colorado

Associated Press

Hot and dry weather on Monday continued to hamper firefighters as they attempted to bring under control seven wildfires in western Colorado.

An eighth blaze, on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation, was brought under control early Monday after burning through about 150 acres of brush and pinon pine. The fire began on Saturday and Bureau of Indian Affairs spokesman Jim Friedle said it may have been caused by lightning.

A fire that broke out in the Book Cliffs area near Grand Junction jumped from 100 acres Sunday evening to 550 acres Monday morning, officials said.

A fire that burned brush, pinon, juniper and Douglas fir in Buniger Canyon, about 20 miles northwest of Grand Junction, was whipped by hot, dry winds and temperatures of more than 100 degrees Sunday.

About 80 firefighters were at a 170-acre fire that erupted over the weekend in Routt National Forest in northwest Colorado.

And a fire about nine miles east of Rangely had spread to 1,050 acres of pinon, juniper, grass and sagebrush.

Another fire had burned about 400 acres in Cox Canyon, about 15 miles south of Durango, by Monday night. The fire threatened people and livestock when winds whipped up Monday afternoon, but evacuation orders later were canceled. The fire was burning brush, cedar, pinon and sagebrush and was out of control Monday night. Firefighters were scheduled to attack the fire in earnest today, officials said.

The Red Mesa fire, also in southwestern Colorado, has been brought under control. La Plata County officials said firefighters will work through Wednesday or Thursday to mop up the fire, which burned between 600 and 1,200 acres of mostly private land.

A fire that started Monday evening was burning about 20 miles southeast of Durango, near Ignacio. That fire was brought under control in about 1½ hours.

FOR THE RECORD